

Town of Underhill Energy Committee

Wednesday, May 10, 2017 6:30 pm

Meeting Minutes - Final

Quorum established. Underhill Energy UEC (UEC) members in attendance: Peter Bennett (PB), Tom Moore (TM), April Desclos (AD), Jerry Adams (JA), Nicole Bourassa (NB), Michael Oman (MO)

Meeting called to order at 6:30 pm, with AD recording minutes.

Discussion of UEC website added to agenda.

Public Comment Period

Peter Duval was present and discussed his thoughts on good governance, including the effects of membership in multiple government committees. He also stated his belief that the Selectboard made a poor decision on street lighting, to the detriment of the town and its citizens. PB respond that Peter Duval's comments were duly noted and appreciated and asked him to let the Committee know if he is requesting any specific action regarding the street lighting decision.

Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes

The April 12, 2017 meeting minutes were unanimously approved.

Transportation

MO provided an update on the commuter bus. The Selectboard agreed that Underhill would contribute an additional \$5,000 to the previously approved \$5,000 for the commuter bus. The purpose of the additional funding is to keep the bus going for another year, but ridership will need to increase. Green Mountain Transit (GMT) has agreed to look into marketing efforts. MO also mentioned that the survey he posted on Front Porch Forum is closed. He received more than 200 responses, 87 of which are from Underhill residents. Some concerns the survey revealed include rider schedules that don't mesh with the bus schedule, quality of bus stops, and lack of shelter. GMT does not want to change the bus schedule until the survey review is complete. TM suggested that an A frame sign showing bus times could increase ridership.

Street lighting

PB provided an update on street lighting upgrades. A Memorandum of Agreement for the street lighting project, between Efficiency Vermont and the Town of Underhill, has been signed. PB emailed Paul Markowitz from Efficiency Vermont, who said he would get rebate process underway. Brian Bigelow has suggested that as part of the project, UEC could look into adding a light at the intersection of Park Street and River Road. GA agreed to work with GMT to come up with a recommendation regarding this additional light, including clarifying whether the Town must give up a light if a light is added.

UEC Website

AD contacted the Rubenstein School to let them know that UEC would like a student to take on the website as part of a senior-level project in the fall. The desired frequency of website posting was discussed, and the Committee generally agreed that at least twice per month would be reasonable. There was also general agreement that posting should be voluntary and that posters should be designated ahead of time during meetings to ensure that content is added frequently enough.

MO commented that he likes Sustainable Williston's blog and asked whether UEC could share website efforts with other Town of Underhill committees, such as conservation. AD noted her support of this idea. PB responded that if we implement this idea, we should ensure that we don't encroach on the Town website. MO also noted that he is interested in not using Facebook for the UEC website platform.

Residential Efficiency Project

Dwight DeCoster previously mentioned the possibility of leading this project. UEC did not discuss the project further since Dwight wasn't present.

UEC Collaboration with the Underhill Planning Commission (PC)

Cynthia Seybolt, Chair of the Planning Commission, sent a memo to the Selectboard recommending that an ad hoc task force of citizens appointed by the Selectboard be created to handle issues related to the commuter bus. MO mentioned that he has talked to Cynthia about the commuter bus being more of an operational issue and not a planning issue, and that there isn't much for a task force to do. MO went on to say that transportation as a broader issue (beyond the commuter bus) does tie to planning due to issues such as land use. PB suggested that an ad hoc committee could be created for common UEC and Planning Commission issues relating to broader transportation topics. All members agreed that PB should mention this idea during the May 18th Planning Commission meeting.

PB mentioned that Cynthia would like UEC to look through Underhill's zoning regulations and highlight any that relate to energy issues. AD agreed to take on this task.

PB also mentioned that Cynthia has requested that UEC draft a paragraph for the energy section of the Town Plan.

Town Energy Planning

The Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission (CCRPC) sent a memo to the Town regarding energy planning, which PB passed along to the UEC. The memo mentions Municipal Energy Data Guides that CCRPC has created and requests feedback on by June 16th. Discussion about the energy planning process ensued, and it was agreed that UEC should read the CCRPC guidance for Underhill and find out if the Planning Director is working on tasks related to energy planning or siting. The members discussed energy siting protections Underhill might need for agricultural or aesthetic reasons and the need for accurate maps. GIS files showing relevant constraints such as deer habitat and wetlands are publicly available through the Vermont Center for Geographic Information. MO said he could pull these GIS files together into a readable map. PB also passed along information about a May 11th energy planning training at the CCRPC office. AD agreed to attend.

Solar Panels on the Old Landfill

The Planning Commission is again asking UEC whether it would be possible to place solar panels on the closed town landfill. NB also mentioned that during an unrelated chat, Kurt Johnson from the Selectboard asked her whether this project could be explored, and that in general, he would like more synergy between UEC and the Selectboard (UEC members expressed agreement with this sentiment). There was discussion that levels of vinyl chloride in one landfill monitoring well have been increasing and that placing heavy equipment on the landfill could affect this contamination. PB asked whether UEC can get a definitive statement from an expert that siting solar panels on the landfill isn't feasible. The members agreed that during the May 16th Planning Commission meeting, PB should state that the site isn't optimal due to contamination concerns.

Event at TM's House

TM is hosting an event focused on high-performance buildings at his home (122 Stevensville Road) from 11 am to 3 pm on June 17th. All are welcome to attend, and TM will post the event on Front Porch Forum. Attendees will include Chris West (a passive house consultant), Building Energy, and students from a few schools that will be able to learn from these experts.

Open Meeting Law

Members discussed the Open Meeting Law and its relation to emails and Google Groups. For email, administrative tasks such as sending agendas is acceptable. Discussion through a chain of emails, however, is risky since a quorum can be established this way. PB mentioned that he has formed a new Google Group, which is public, to reduce this risk. AD asked whether discussion through a Google Group would violate requirements to warn meetings. PB said he would send along a Vermont League of Cities and Towns FAQ which could help answer this question, and AD agreed to try to resolve the question.

Advertisement of Jericho Energy Task Force (JETF) Events

Phyl Newbeck has NB's email to send JETF events for advertisement in Underhill.

Next UEC Meeting

At the next meeting (June 14th), UEC will discuss Planning Commission issues and talk to Dwight DeCoster about potential residential efficiency projects.

ADJOURNMENT

On motion by TM, meeting was adjourned at 8:13 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

April Desclos, Member of Town of Underhill Energy Committee

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Approved on: June 14, 2017

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Peter T. Bennett". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Peter Bennett, Chair